On Demonized Muslims and Vilified Jews: Between Theory and Politics

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"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Why should we do it? What good will it do us? But above all, how shall we achieve it? . . . (E)ven more incomprehensible . . . is "Love thine enemies." . . . What is the point of a precept enunciated with so much solemnity if its fulfillment cannot be recommended as reasonable? . . . I think I can now hear a dignified voice admonishing me: it is precisely because your neighbor . . . is your enemy that you should love him as yourself.

—————Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

In this article I engage the work of three scholars, each of whom speaks to reactions to Muslims or interventions in their lives in the United States and Europe. Each is critical of these reactions and interventions, and traces them to inconsistencies in liberal thought and practice. My purpose is to interrogate their theorizing by applying it to the interface of liberalism with another religious Other, one that tends to generate far less sympathy in the predominantly secular and liberal academy: religiously motivated Jewish settlers in Israeli-occupied territories. The first scholar is Saba Mahmood, who recently argued against U.S. involvement in trying to alter the theology and practices of Muslims in the Middle East. The second is Judith Butler, who in a 2008 article addressed Muslims in the Netherlands, the problems of citizenship, and the right to religious freedom. Finally, Talal Asad has spoken to issues of violence, arguing

that suicide bombing is really not so different from state violences perpetrated by the United States and Israel. Each of their arguments contains critiques of secular liberalism and the contradictory ethics and inconsistencies within liberal thought and practice, and each carries different but related implications. My intent is to begin to explore the possibilities of applying the analyses of these writers to the case of conflict between religiously motivated settlers in Israeli-occupied territories and left-wing, secular, and liberal Israeli Jews. Although this case mirrors broader representations of "Islam and the West," it is rarely considered in comparison when such representations are deconstructed. The questions raised through this uncomfortable comparison will, I hope, contribute to broader conversations about the challenges and complexities of living together with differences that may be threatening if not altogether incommensurable.[1]

Before I delve into this theoretical conundrum, allow me to provide some background on the Israeli context that will serve as a counterpoint to the three interventions dealing with Islam that I will discuss.

ISRAELI NEIGHBORS

As far as I'm concerned, we can build a wall around them ... throw away the key. Let them have their own state as long as they don't interfere with us!

In the space of Israel/Palestine, one might expect such sentiments of exasperation to be expressed in reference to Palestinian Arabs by a Jewish Israeli, or to Jewish Israelis by a Palestinian Arab. In fact, the statement was made by a secular, Jewish Israeli high school student in reference to religious Israeli Jews (see Beilin 2004). This young man, expressing his aggravation with the ways in which religious Judaism interferes with his secular liberties, gives extreme meaning to the idea, well known in the secularization thesis, of privatizing religion. There is great tension between religious and secular Jewish Israelis as the secular struggle against what they see as religious impositions on their freedom in everyday life. Orthodox Haredi Jews are often despised, but those deemed most dangerous in today's political climate are the nationalist orthodox, often referred to as Jewish "fundamentalists."[2]

The sets of ideas and practices commonly referred to as religious fundamentalism tend to create a sense of anxiety. Fundamentalisms are categorized,

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[1] The three pieces I engage with here all address this issue. See also Povinelli's discussion of radical differences and "incommensurable worlds" (2001).

[2] While the use of the term "fundamentalism" has been widely debated and often deemed inappropriate when applied to Jewish religious groups, the term has become commonplace in academic writing and is in everyday use inside Israel. For example, see Gideon Aran's work in Marty and Appleby's fundamentalisms project (Aran 1991). It is not my purpose to enter the debates surrounding the definition of this term. I use it here following the common usage to refer to ideological Jewish religious settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as their supporters.

analyzed, marginalized, and demonized in both academic and popular spheres, and Jewish fundamentalism in the space of Israel/Palestine is no exception (Aran 1991; 1997; Lustick 1988; 1993; Silberstein 1993; Sivan 1995). The term, in this case, can include a number of right-wing religious beliefs and practices, but it is often associated with the settler movement: those religiously motivated nationalists who make their homes in Israeli occupied Palestine on land conquered by Israel in the June 1967 war, and who believe deeply in the value of Jewish presence in the biblical Land of Israel. Moderate, left-wing, and secular discourses present those settlers as a great threat to democracy. Indeed, from these perspectives the settlers are often despised and ridiculed, and in numerous contexts this hatred and derision is considered legitimate. Religiously motivated settlers are construed not only as dangerous to democracy, but as posing an existential threat to the future of the state of Israel (as reported in Shavit 2004). In the popular media and in increasingly popular political pronouncements, right-wing religious settlers are depicted as an impediment to the potential for a just resolution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. In particular, their unwillingness to make territorial compromises is considered a major obstacle to peace.[3]

During a twelve-month period preceding the redeployment of Israeli troops and removal of settlers from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005, I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork that focused on this conflict between variously situated Israeli Jews. My study includes religiously motivated right-wing settlers in Israeli-occupied territories of the Gaza Strip (prior to their evacuation), and left-wing liberal Israelis living inside the internationally recognized boundaries of Israel (inside the pre-1967 armistice line, the Green Line) opposed to settlement in the occupied territories.[4] These population groups tend to appear as sets of binary oppositions: left versus right, secular versus religious, and opposed to

[3] The positioning of right-wing settlers as dangerous or impeding peace has been central to left-wing depictions since settlement in the occupied territories began. But the current mainstream political initiative to remove some settlers may be read as a kind of betrayal, since this population previously enjoyed a privileged status, having been mobilized as an extension of Zionist discourse and practices. Changing representations of settlement activity blur distinctions between left and right.

[4] I have chosen the term "religiously motivated" in reference to those settlers who maintain that it is their responsibility as believers to fulfill the will of God in bringing a Jewish presence to the biblical land of Israel. Such people are often referred to as "Jewish Fundamentalists," the "radical right wing" or as members of *Gush Emunim*. Aran (1991) and Lustick (1988) both use the term "fundamentalists." Lustick includes members of the right wing who are not religiously motivated in that category. This coincides with a call by Nagata (2001) to expand the use of the term for anthropological study. Sivan (1995) uses the term "fundamentalism" in the plural form to compare what he calls Jewish, Islamic, and Protestant forms of this category. He then applies Mary Douglas's "enclave" typology to analyze these groups. In addition to the obvious problems of extending the term "fundamentalists" beyond the American Protestant context to Jewish Israelis, there is the problem that those being studied here do not necessarily identify with the term *Gush Emunim*, and take offense or find amusement at being labeled the "radical right." The "enclave" notion, it seems to me, could just as easily be applied to the secular who identify against the

versus in favor of settlement in post-1967 occupied territories. These divisions are often further conflated into two competing categories: the secular, left-wing, liberal Israeli opposed to the settlements versus the right-wing, religious Israeli who favors ongoing settlement expansion or believes in what is known as *Eretz Yisrael ha-shlema*, the right of the Jewish people to the "whole" of Israel.[5] There is a great deal of antagonism between these two groups, each claiming that the other's beliefs and ways of life are dangerous and may even imperil the very future of the state. The case of antagonism between right-wing religious settlers and left-wing secular liberals in Israel resonates powerfully with broader appearances of deep divisions between liberalism and religiosity, and in particular with representations of a stark division between "Islam and the West." In what follows, I consider questions and challenges the Israeli case poses for scholarly interventions into contemporary issues of religious/secular conflict, and how those studies inform this case. I consider what kinds of approaches might be most useful in thinking about how we can live together with radical differences.

NEIGHBORS AND ENEMIES, POLITICS AND RELIGION, MUSLIMS AND JEWS

The comparative literature on religious fundamentalism includes the case of religious Jewish settlers, among other religious groups.[6] But the scholarly work aimed at unsettling powerful binary distinctions between secular liberal ways of life and religious structures of meaning has focused primarily on the case of "Muslims" and "the West," and has ignored similar discursive distinctions between other secular and religious groups like those in Israel. The problematic interface of political liberalism with certain forms of religiosity has been of growing concern to scholars across disciplines. With emerging global power struggles, and in particular following the defining moment of September 11, a wave of scholarly analyses has been published addressing "Islam" and the "West." Some of these authors have seen some form of "clash" of cultures or civilizations, while others have rejected the idea of such a clash. Some take great pains to explain Muslim "others," while another group of scholars is determined to focus on responses to those Muslim others. Some argue that if there is an "us against them" situation it has resulted

religious. Those referred to here as emerging from the "radical left" used that phrase to describe themselves.

[5] These divisions are sometimes referred to as the "rift among the people." See Goodman and Yonah (2004) for a useful analysis of this problematic discourse represented as conflict between religious and secular Israelis, and how it serves a secular hegemony.

[6] See the five volumes produced by the Fundamentalisms Project from the University of Chicago Press, as well as comparative work by Silberstein (1993), Juergensmeyer (2000), and Antoun (2008).

from our own actions in the West. Others call for a more nuanced understanding of historical relationships and commonalities, and argue that it is impossible to understand current conflicts between religious ways of life and formations of the secular simply in terms of a clash.

For analysts in the last two categories (we created them, and we have a lot in common with them), studying the limits of liberal tolerance and the recognition of certain forms of religiosity has taken on a greater urgency with the case of Islam. A number have pointed to the contradictory ethics contained in liberal and secular humanism, which abhors violence on the basis of difference, and yet engages in violent practices to protect its way of life (Povinelli 2001; 2003; Brown 2006a; 2006b; Mahmood 2006; Asad 2007; Butler 2008). Indeed, within current global political constellations, numerous scholars have come to the defense of the religious group most targeted as enemies of the so-called "West." But this raises questions about the broader applicability of theorizing that defends a particular religious group through a critique of modern liberalism and secularism. Can this kind of theorizing be applied beyond the case of today's targeted, vilified other? Would it clarify cases of discrimination against, containment of, or attempts at removing religious groups in other places or at other historical moments? Surely the question of the Jew comes to mind. Recall Hannah Arendt's concerns when reflecting on Jews in pre-World War II Europe, that those who "heard the strange compliment that they were exceptions, exceptional Jews, knew quite well that it was this very ambiguity—that they were Jews and yet presumably not *like* Jews—which opened the doors of society to them" (1968 [1948]: 56). It was an ambiguous acceptance based on a double difference: difference from the gentiles who could accept the Jewish others because they had become in some ways similar to the gentiles, and different from other Jews. Thus, as in many circumstances concerning contemporary Muslim individuals and communities, some religious others could be accepted through exception. They were accepted once changed in specific ways, which made "them" more like a particular version of a modern, post-Enlightenment "us." I am certainly not the first scholar to point to a commonality between Muslim and Jew, or even, more specifically, to the conflation that results in a representation of Arab against Jew. Most recently, for example, Anidjar has suggested a relationship between Arab and Jew with each being different facets of "the enemy" of a Christian Europe (2003).[7] Others have pointed to a need to investigate the ways in which Orientalism (Said 1978) has affected Jews as well as Arabs, in particular Arab Jews, or those Jews who lived in Arab countries

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[7] Reflecting on Derrida, Anidjar writes: "The enemy—as a concrete, discursive, vanishing field, 'the shadow of an ageless ghost,' as Derrida puts it—is structured by the Arab and the Jew, that is to say, by the relation of Europe to both Arab and Jew . . . they—the Jew and the Arab on the one hand, religion and politics on the other—are distinct but indissociable" (2003: xi).

(Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). However, my concern here is not with the broad category of Jews in modernity, or with anti-Semitism or Orientalism as such, but more specifically with the form of Jewish religiosity that is often categorized as radical, extremist, fundamentalist, or violent.

This article explores both the usefulness of and unease with applying such theorizing to a contemporary conflict between liberalism and religious extremism that arguably exists *within* a particular project of modernity, one usually represented as part of Western power: the modern political Zionist project in Palestine.[8] Moving away from what appears as a global showdown between Christianity and Islam, or the so-called "West" and certain forms of Islam, I focus on the case of religiously motivated Jewish settlers in the space of Israel/Palestine, and the liberal and secular public in Israel and beyond, which vehemently opposes the post-1967 settlement project.[9] The latter include Israelis and members of the international community who voice opposition to the occupation in territories gained by Israel after 1967, and who often view religiously motivated settlers as a serious threat to democracy in Israel and the possibility of peace with Palestinians and neighboring Arab states.[10]

Despite the political unease this case brings, in particular to left-wing and progressive activists and scholars, it is important to understand that it is comparable to the case of "Islam and West." It, too, is a case of powerful representations that conceal as much as they reveal.[11] Like the appearance of a clash between Muslims and the West, the antagonism between Israeli settlers

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[8] This is to distinguish modern, political Zionism from traditional Jewish beliefs, which might also be considered a form of Zionism. It also calls attention to the polysemic quality of political Zionism itself, which is so often conflated.

[9] I here distinguish those people who voice opposition to settlement in the territories gained by Israel in the 1967 war—often referred to more simply as "the occupied territories"—from those who oppose the state of Israel in its entirety as a foreign imposition in the Middle East.

[10] Lustick made this argument in his 1988 book on the settler movement. He argued that the settler movement, *Gush Emunim*, and their political allies, all of whom he called "fundamentalists" posed a significant danger to the prospects of arriving at negotiated peace agreements. At the time, he believed this segment was receiving insufficient attention. The sentiment that these settlers are dangerous has only grown since 1988. See also note 4.

[11] In studying the case of antagonism among Israeli Jews, I have written about the mutual othering that takes place and the hierarchy of difference, and have explored what is enabled through the appearance of a discourse of conflict, and missed as a result of its centrality (2005). Studying the categories through which we order humanity and through which politics takes place is crucial because the ways in which we order, divide, and categorize our socio-political world are not innocent. These categories do not simply arise giving names to already existing essences in the world. There are no essences out in the world waiting to be named (Foucault 1972). Instead, groups, subgroups, and divisions between people are constructed through discursive practices. These divisions have very real outcomes, including the constitution of categories of identity, religion, and politics, the delimitation of the contours of action and debate in the present, and the construction of boundaries within which we might imagine possible futures. The narratives that emerge through these divisions become familiar to us, taking the form of common knowledge upon which we base our judgments and take action in the world.

inscribes differences that forget the connections and continuities beneath the appearance of a deep divide. The Israeli case requires a comparable application of theory, or it stands to undermine the theoretical integrity of those scholarly interventions that question the limits of liberal tolerance for currently demonized Muslim others. Those whose politics place them in opposition to Zionism—or in opposition to religiously motivated (or non-religious nationalist) Zionist expansion in the occupied territories—may argue that this case is *not* comparable, or perhaps that it in fact undermines the theorizing under consideration in this article. It is my contention that the case *is* comparable, and that we must understand interpretations of and interventions into the lives of religious settlers, which are similar to interpretations and interventions concerning Muslims, as equally problematic and contradictory to the ideals of tolerance and freedom, including freedom of religious expression. This case, too, lays bare contradictions that inhere between the theory and practice of liberal humanism. It is an uncomfortable case because it troubles politics in the guise of theory. Scholars today who express concern over the demonization of Muslims tend to align themselves in opposition to the Israeli occupation and are concerned with the rights of Palestinians, which means they are opposed to the beliefs and practices of religiously motivated Jewish settlers. Thus, expanding notions of freedom to include recognition of these religious others means making room for people whose beliefs and practices many scholars deem morally repugnant (Harding 1991). It is, therefore, precisely the kind of problem that requires thinking beyond comfortable categories of politics.

IN THE SPACE OF ISRAEL

The socio-political-religious scene among Jewish Israelis tends to be depicted in both popular and academic discourse as sets of binary oppositions: right/left, religious/secular, settler/opposed to settlement in post-1967 occupied territories, which are often conflated to left-wing secular versus right-wing religious. These divisions are considered a part of what is known in Israel as the "rift among the people." There is great animosity between these groups, with each claiming that the other's beliefs and ways of life are not only wrong, irrational, or relics of the past, but also threatening to the future of the state or even the Jewish people.[12] I have been studying this tension between Israeli Jews since the year before the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005 through ethnographic fieldwork among residents of the settlements of Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip, and those living inside the internationally recognized borders of Israel near the Gaza Strip. Unlike

[12] For a detailed analysis of this antagonism, see Dalsheim 2005. I argue that the arguments between secular left-wing Israelis living inside the Green Line and religious right-wing "settlers" reveal a positional unity and are indicative of a society that continues to struggle with the outcomes of its settler origins and on-going settlement activity.

other studies (Lustick 1988; 1993; Silberstein 1993; Sivan 1995; Feige 2003; Zertal and Eldar 2007), which emphasize ideological differences or point to the settler project in the occupied territories as having fundamentally altered the very foundations of Israeli society, my work finds a depth of commonality beneath this tension. I theorize the antagonism between these groups as a case of a Freudian narcissism of minor differences (Dalsheim 2005).

The tensions and conflicts between religious and secular Jews in Israel are neither simple nor straightforward. They bear similarities to tensions between religious and secular groups elsewhere, but also include important features specific to the Israeli-Palestinian context. Among the secular in Israel, ultra-Orthodox or Haredi Jews are often reviled. They are stereotypically viewed as non-productive citizens because of their emphasis on religious study. Further, they are known for actively attempting to impose their belief system on others by insisting, for example, that the Sabbath be protected by closing places of business and entertainment, thereby interfering with secular liberties. In the current political climate the nationalist orthodox have often been at the center of controversy. These are religiously motivated nationalists who make their homes in Israeli-occupied Palestine on land conquered by Israel in 1967, and who believe deeply in the value of Jewish presence in the biblical Land of Israel. These settlers are often blamed for the intractable conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and their settlements are considered one of the greatest obstacles to peace in the region.

The terms "left wing" and "secular" describe a range of positions and practices within Israel. Versions or degrees of secular, left-wing, and "mainstream" Jewish Israeliness can be found in numerous locations. For right-wing, religiously motivated settlers, the left and secular can be seen to pose a threat to the future of both the People of Israel (meaning Jews both inside and outside the state)[13] and the state of Israel, for several reasons. In the current political climate, what religiously motivated settlers consider most damaging is what they see to be a failure of left-wing or secular Jews to understand the central importance of the connection between the Jewish people and the (biblical) Land of Israel.[14] For these settlers, peace will come when justice has been done, and justice means returning all of the Land of Israel to its rightful owners, those to whom God promised it, the Jewish People.[15]

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[13] "The People of Israel," or *Am Israel*, refers to the Jewish people rather than the citizens of Israel—it includes all Jews.

[14] "The Land of Israel" is capitalized to distinguish this idea from the territory of the modern state of Israel.

[15] This position is explained in greater detail (in Hebrew) from the point of view of religious settlers, on the Torah and the Land Institute website: http://www.toraland.org.il. Similar views can be found on "Arutz Sheva," at: http://www.israelnationalnews.com. Artuz Sheva means "Channel Seven," and was once a pirate radio station that was outlawed in Israel. It continues to broadcast in a number of languages on the Internet.

The debates between left and right, secular and religious, and those Israelis living on either side of the pre-1967 border appear as sets of incommensurable discourses, competing narratives about what it means to be Jewish that will determine the future character of the state, or even whether the state will have a future.[16] The left-wing discourse is rooted in a progressivist secular humanism, while right-wing, religiously motivated settlers speak in terms of sanctification, fulfilling the will of God, and redemption. This rupture becomes God's Law versus Man's Law, incommensurable from the very grounds upon which each is based. Those holding to these ways of thinking are hard pressed to speak each other's language, with each relegating the other to the past and vying to represent the future. This apparent clash of worldviews resonates deeply with the idea of a broader clash of cultures or civilizations on the global scene.

This hegemonic discourse of conflict in Israel presents a case that parallels the apparent division between what is often depicted as the liberalism of the West in conflict with the fundamentalism of Islam. The idea of a clash of values, beliefs, and practices results in each group vilifying or marginalizing the other. Each establishes its identity in contrast to the other, and in many ways each is construed as the constitutive outside of the other, marking group boundaries of identity, politics, and ethics. The differences, however, are not equivalent, since religiously motivated settlers are the marked group within the broader Israeli context. They are the "others" to the unmarked, hegemonic secular. Throughout my research, I have often found that liberal, secular, and left-wing Israeli Zionists are particularly determined to demonstrate that religiously motivated settlers and the settler project in post-1967 territories represent a break from both Judaism and the socialist Zionism of the state's founders. These two charges—not really Zionism, and not really Judaism—echo broader responses and analyses at the interface of liberalism and religiosity, particularly with regard to certain beliefs and practices among Muslims. We often hear denunciations of the acts of those referred to as Islamists, Jihadists, or radical Muslims, with the twin claims that they are not really Islam, and that they are stark opposites to the tenets of Western political ideology, democracy, and liberal humanism.[17]

DEMONIZED MUSLIMS, VILIFIED JEWS

The case of these Jews, I argue, is an uncomfortable one for present models. This case has yet to be approached in the same way as what seem to be

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[16]   There are also right-wing secular and left-wing religious Israelis, and yet, so often, religiosity and right-wing politics are considered coterminous.

[17]   For example, see the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) website (http://www.cair.com/home.aspx), whose work is largely devoted to presenting a positive view of Islam in the United States. See also Informed Consent, a website presenting the viewpoints of Juan Cole, a professor of history of the Middle East, and a public intellectual who often speaks out on behalf of Islam and Muslim countries in the Middle East (http://www.juancole.com).

similar cases of certain Muslim populations. This leads me to ask what is at stake in comparing liberalism's problematic interface with certain forms of religiosity to its approach to these *other* religious others? According to Asad, what is at stake is our *recognition* of other people's very humanity (2003). For Arendt, this meant recognition of religious and political differences, as she noted the danger of reducing the person to a "human being in general" (2003 [1951]: 43). This, of course, has serious implications for civil and human rights within both multicultural or plural democracies and the international community. More to the point, it seems that there is a move among scholars to carve out a moral position that both draws upon liberal sensibilities and pushes at the limits of liberal tolerance.[18] I will argue that the similarities between the case of so-called radical Muslims and that of so-called radical Jewish settlers requires a reconsideration of both this scholarship and of the case of Jewish settlers.

SECULARISM AND SUBJECTIVITY

In a recent article, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," Saba Mahmood interrogates the way in which "secularism" works today. It is not so much a matter of separating religion from the public sphere, she argues, but has to do more with attempts to intervene in the lives of certain religious people. According to Mahmood, a problematic conception of secularism underlies the idea that Islam needs to be reformed, and it has resulted in attempts to alter the theology and practice of Islam to produce "the kind of religious subject who is compatible with the rationality and exercise of liberal political rule" (2006: 344). Her case study details the ways in which the U.S. State Department and the Rand Corporation have engaged in a "theological campaign aimed at shaping the sensibilities of ordinary Muslims whom the State Department deems to be too dangerously inclined toward fundamentalist interpretations of Islam" (ibid.: 329). It aims at transforming Islam from within by aligning with those Muslims deemed moderate, tolerant, and prone to democratic values while trying to transform those Muslims labeled "traditionalists" (332). Mahmood's objections to State Department practices of intervention come at two levels: that of practical outcomes and that of intellectual consistency. First, she argues these interventions are mistaken because they do not actually target those Muslims who tend toward

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[18] In addition to the three pieces considered here, Povinelli (2001) and Asad (2007) engage Michael Walzer's *On Toleration* (1997), criticizing the limitations of tolerance that Walzer outlines as both reasonable and necessary to protect a particular way of life. Brown (2006a; 2006b) provides a sustained critique of how tolerance is employed or deployed in liberal democracies like the United States. However, none of these authors calls for the end of liberal democracy. Instead, for Brown in particular, there is a call to "open liberal regimes to reflect on their false conceits," and to open them to the "possibility of being transformed by their encounter with what liberalism has conventionally taken to be its constitutive outside, its hostile other" (2006a: 174).

violence (333). Thus, we should refrain from intervening in the lives of Muslims because, in any case, we get it wrong.

The second level of objection follows from a critique of the contradictions within a particular liberal conception of secularism that is rooted in religious tolerance. The separation of church and state (in its U.S. formulation) is meant to provide a political solution that maintains the right to practice religion freely. However, according to Mahmood, the tension between establishing and maintaining a boundary between religion and state while at the same time defending the right to practice religion freely is a problematic inconsistency within liberal doctrine. She argues that promoting liberal political rule actually contradicts liberal moral standards of tolerance for religious differences, because the political doctrine of secularism does not really work by separating religion from the public sphere, but instead determines the kind of subjectivity that a secular culture authorizes by defining that which is the exception. Mahmood draws on Talal Asad's argument that even though secularism presupposes the mutual independence of political power and religious life, the state actually has the power to make decisions that affect religious practices and doctrines, while the obverse is not true. The state retains the exclusive authority to define the exception. Asad writes that secularists miss how certain discourses become part of the powerful practices that cultivate sensibilities essential to a kind of contradictory, or impossible, individual. This is one who is morally sovereign but at the same time is obedient to the laws of a secular republic (2006). Secularism, Mahmood argues, determines what counts as truly spiritual and how faith should be practiced.[19] It is not really about tolerating difference and diversity, but rather is about remaking religious subjectivities that will be compliant with liberal political rule (ibid.: 328). What Mahmood categorizes as "secularism" might be more accurately described as a kind of hegemonic Protestantism.[20] However, my goal here is not to critique the analytical usefulness of specific terms, but rather to consider the possibility of applying Mahmood's theorizing to a comparable case.

What would happen if we applied a similar line of thought to religiously motivated settlers in Israeli-occupied territories? On one hand, Mahmood's argument for what she calls the "force of secularism" to produce the kinds of subjects who are more compatible with liberal rule and state projects seems

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[19] This includes an emphasis on a kind of reasoning that questions religious authority (Mahmood 2006: 334). See my chapter "Disciplining Doubt: Expressing Uncertainty in Gush Katif" (in Dalsheim, forthcoming) for a similar situation between Jews in Israel.

[20] Gregory Starrett argues that what Mahmood is describing is in fact a powerful, widespread, and very explicitly Protestant ideology (personal communication). This coincides with the argument put forth by Webb Keane. In his recent book, Keane quotes a friend who remarks, "We are all Protestants now," which Keane uses as shorthand to describe the spread of Protestantism and the kinds of subjectivities it engenders that are integral to a particular, powerful vision of modernity (2007: 201).

to apply to this case. In August 2005, the Israeli government decided to implement a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. This included the forcible removal of about nine thousand Israelis from their homes in the settlements there. Certainly, the settlers removed had a sense that this was precisely a matter of the state trying to send them a message, to rein them in and weaken the project of religiously motivated settlement by moving them and breaking up their communities, and by making sure they understood that they had to respect state decisions, even when such decisions contradicted their religious beliefs. If Mahmood's argument can be applied, the implication might be that we—the state of Israel, and by extension U.S. foreign policy—should not interfere with the lives of these settlers. We should not intervene in ways that undermine their belief system. This is so, first, because we have a tendency to get it wrong when we do. Certainly, this would be clearly aligned with what many settlers and their supporters have argued. Interfering with settler beliefs and removing them from their homes was the wrong thing to do, they argue, often offering the rise of Hamas in the Gaza Strip as evidence of this mistaken action. Second, according to Mahmood, such interventions contradict the values of liberal humanism and democracy because they attempt to create certain kinds of subjects that are compatible with liberal rule.

On the other hand, one might argue that it is theoretically problematic to apply these conclusions to the Israeli case, either because the issues of religion and state take a different form in Israel, or because this is not a case of foreign intervention since it takes places within a particular polity.[21] (And, after all, are not all states involved in producing their subjects either through force or other processes?) In that sense, the Israeli case may be closer to that of Muslims in Europe and issues of citizenship rights and religious freedom.

CITIZENSHIP, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Judith Butler recently wrote an article examining a hierarchy of difference through the case of Muslim migrants to the Netherlands (2008). For Butler, what is at stake in cases of citizenship for Muslims in Europe is a matter of competing freedoms that are differentially valued within a modernist, linear temporality. Citing the procedures Muslims must undergo to become Dutch citizens, Butler is concerned that in order to maintain a certain kind of society with particular freedoms for some citizens, the rights of Muslim immigrants might be denied. In the case of the Netherlands, according to Butler, one

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[21] It might be argued that the case of Israel is different because its internal contradiction does not arise from the problem of religion and state in the same way, but rather from its attempt to be at once a Jewish state and a democratic state. This has meant that from its earliest days there have been numerous compromises made to avoid alienating religious Jews. These have included special provisions allowing Orthodox Jews to claim exemption from the military duty that is mandatory for all citizens. It has also meant allowing religious control over certain legal matters like marriage and divorce.

thing asked of Muslims applying for citizenship is that they respond to an image of two men kissing. They are asked if they find this kind of behavior offensive to their religious sensibilities. The implication is that this might be a way of discouraging or controlling immigration. Butler is concerned that the freedom of sexual preference and expression not be used to deny freedom of religion and citizenship rights. Most broadly, this reflects a maxim underlying an American sense of what freedom should mean: the idea that the freedoms of all citizens should be protected to the extent that one's freedom does not interfere with someone else's. However, Butler says hegemonic conceptions of progress interfere with such freedoms by distinguishing between what or who is modern, and who has not yet arrived in modernity. Her work is addressed to progressive politics, which she says relies on a concept of freedom that is understood to emerge through time, and within which secularism is often associated with this progression toward freedom. The result for the case she considers is that acceptance of homosexuality comes to be positively associated with embracing modernity, and the freedom of gay people can be a marker exemplifying a culturally advanced position. Through a critique of this concept of secular time, Butler calls for a multifaceted modernity that allows for multiple freedoms, a modernity in which sexual freedoms would not depend upon the foreclosure of rights of religious expression (2008: 6).[22] If Butler's concerns were applied to the case of religiously motivated settlers, what would the implications be?

The maxim that requires the most possible freedom for individuals and groups, so long as those liberties do not interfere with the liberties of others, is clearly applied in Israel when the secular feel their rights are limited by religious impositions like closing places of business or public transportation on the Sabbath. But following Butler's critique, we might argue that secular freedoms should likewise not interfere with religious freedoms. So, what happens in Israel when secular freedoms interfere with the religious? What happens when working or playing music interferes with the right to observe the Sabbath? And, far more profoundly, what happens when secular decisions about trading land for peace interfere with what some religious Jews construe to be not only their right, but also their obligation to hasten the coming of the messiah by living according to their interpretation of sacred texts? Clearly the

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[22] In fact, Butler suggests common interests between religious Muslims and homosexuals in the Netherlands in opposition to both forms of discrimination. While I doubt actual coalitions are possible, I would point out that moving beyond well-known categories of politics and difference allows us to see certain common interests even among groups in opposition. For example, in the space of Israel/Palestine, religiously motivated settlers and Palestinians are in direct conflict over territory, but both groups have opposed the construction of the separation barrier, albeit for very different reasons. It is hard to imagine a coalition between religiously motivated Jewish settlers and Palestinians (and their left-wing supporters). However, both have demonstrated against the separation barrier or wall that is being constructed on contested land.

expectation that one will not interfere with the lives of others, or will accept those others without attempting to contain or change their way of life, is not reciprocal.

Butler's argument for free religious expression and the rights of citizenship for Muslims in Europe is more concerned about protecting the rights of minorities or subaltern groups, those relatively lacking in power who have been discriminated against or subject to coercion. Again, one might argue that inside Israel, religiously motivated settlers are a relatively small minority. They are not accepted by the more mainstream in Israel, and have been derided as problematic members of a democratic society, because their religious beliefs are seen as unreasonable, irrational, and dangerous. In short, in terms of Butler's argument about secular time, these religiously motivated settlers fall outside of the progressive modern. At the same time, despite the instances of withdrawal and dismantling of communities, to the extent the settler project in Israeli-occupied territories has coincided with state interests, the state has for decades supported it with funding (Zertal and Eldar 2007). This seems to indicate that religious ways of life are not, in and of themselves, considered problematic, but can be co-opted or interfered with depending on state interests at any given moment. Indeed, the beliefs of secular citizens can be and have been similarly co-opted. Which brings us back to Mahmood's discussion of subjectivity and the ways in which states or supra-states are involved in disciplining processes to create certain kinds of subjects.

Based on Butler's arguments about competing freedoms and the importance of carefully assessing political situations and protecting rights, to what extent should we feel compelled to protect the rights of religiously motivated settlers to practice their beliefs about living on the "Land of Israel"? That right clearly interferes with the freedoms of others. Many secular and left-wing Israelis who are opposed to Israeli occupation of post-1967 territories are especially concerned when it comes to having to participate in the military defense of those settlers, and about the state spending for building and protecting settlements. All this, of course, is a debate that takes place on the backs of the Palestinians, so to speak, since at stake are their rights to land, sovereignty, and freedom, including the right to freedom of religious beliefs and practices.

COMPARABLE VIOLENCES

Finally, I turn to Talal Asad and his most recent book, *On Suicide Bombing* (2007). Asad focuses on the kind of critique that requires reflection on the collective self either prior to or instead of criticism of those categorized as dangerously different. Unlike those scholars who support the "clash of civilizations" thesis, Asad opposes the idea of absolute differences (between "us" and our "enemies"). Instead of looking at, for example, "Islamic fundamentalists" (or Islamists) as the dangerous others to be explained, he suggests looking at ways in which "we"—in the United States, the liberal West, or secular

humanists—are like "them." That is, he argues that we should reflect deeply on the ways in which our collective behavior is, and has been, both inseparable from and comparable to the behavior of those enemy others (like radical Islamists, including suicide bombers). For example, Asad in considering modern uses of violence writes of suicide bombing, "The creation of terror and perpetration of atrocities are aspects of militant action in the unequal world we inhabit . . ." (2007: 3). It is a mistake to view that world as made up of distinct and self-contained civilizations that have remained unchanged through time. At least in part, the logical conclusion of this line of thought is that if we find the violent practices of others abhorrent and morally reprehensible, we would do well to remember that our histories are intertwined, and that we are at least partially responsible for the unequal world in which live, and therefore for creating the conditions in which these violences have arisen. In addition, we have carried out violent acts on far larger scales, causing much more damage, including the deaths of civilians, which we call "collateral damage." We express remorse, marking ourselves as different even as we continue to engage in these violent practices. For Asad, then, before condemning Islamic "fundamentalists," terrorists, and suicide bombers, we should recognize the ways in which we participate in practices which we abhor when carried out by others, and we should recognize the need for change within our own ways of life. My question here is, can we extend Asad's arguments? Before condemning Muslims involved in suicide bombings *and* before condemning religiously motivated Jewish settlers, should we recognize our own practices that bear distinct similarities to those we condemn? Should we also always recognize the broader context in which these practices arise and consider our participation in creating these situations?

Religiously motivated settlers in Israeli-occupied territories are often condemned by their opposition for the violence of their settlement project. This includes both the structural violence of territorial expansion and the face-to-face violence between settlers and Palestinians. If we apply Asad's analytical framework to religiously motivated settlers, then those who oppose these settlers should look for the ways in which they (we) have been complicit in creating the conditions in which the violence of settlement takes place, as well as their (our) own complicity in similar forms of violence. At first glance this means noting the support that post-1967 settlements have received since their inception by Israeli administrations led by both the left and right wings (Zertal and Eldar 2007). Beyond this, continuity can be found by recognizing post-1967 settlement as an extension of the Zionist project itself, which is at base a settler project in Palestine.[23] Some would

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[23] Gershon Shafir was probably the first Israeli sociologist to use the designation "settler-colonial" as an analytical framework for Israeli society, building on and refining Maxime Rodinson's work (Rodinson 1973). For a systematic typology of colonial formations and

argue that considering the context of this project means looking back to nineteenth-century anti-Semitism in Europe against which the modern political project of Zionism emerged. Others contend that the modern discourse of anti-Semitism in nineteenth-century Europe and political discourses of nation states and Zionism are related in more ways than the causal links that traditional histories suggest (Halevi 1987: 155–57).[24] That is, rather than think of Zionism only as a reaction to anti-Semitism, it has been argued that these ideologies share a common set of conditions that allowed them to emerge. The racist theories of the nineteenth century, which classified the Jews as a race (genealogically tied together as a people rather than as a group who could chose affiliation with a religious institution), and the conditions which created the need and the right of citizens to rule themselves, underlie the combination of nationalism and democracy in which self-rule is a right granted to a people, in this case, the Jewish people. These are the same conditions in which this people (the Jews as a nation) are constructed against another people (the Palestinians as a nation) vying for sovereignty over the same territory. Following Asad, then, we can find historical connections and commonalities at many levels. But what are the implications of this kind of analysis for the case of religiously motivated settlers and their opposition in the present? If we find historical connections and continuities between the left and right, secular and religious practices of Zionism, and we find one set of practices morally problematic, does that result in undermining the moral legitimacy of the entire Zionist project? I have argued that it is largely the fear of this—that the legitimacy of the entire project will be undermined—that propels the vilification of religiously motivated settlers (Dalsheim 2005). While this might explain the virulence expressed toward religiously motivated, right-wing settlers by members of the secular and liberal Zionist left, the problem of living together with significant differences remains.

THE WORK OF VILIFICATION

The antagonism between the variously situated groups of Israeli Jews in my study re-inscribes existing categories that constitute the parameters of discourse and practice, in ways that parallel the appearance of a broader clash of cultures between "the West" and "Islam" that Mahmood, Butler, Asad, and many others have written against. Certain work is accomplished through a discourse of conflict, again very much like that achieved through the appearance of a clash of cultures between Islam and the West. In the

Shafir's argument of how Zionism fits into that typology as a "pure settlement" colony, see Shafir 1989: 8–10. For more recent work, see Shafir and Peled 2002. Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling used the term "immigrant-settler" rather than "settler-colonial" to describe Israeli society.

[24] Ammiel Alcalay writes of the long historical process of transformation in Jewish history: "the gradual exchange of the legal, communal and cultural basis of Jewish existence for the racial the ethnic and the national ... [which] assumed a final physical form in the Levant" (1993: 221).

case of Israel, that work is at least two-fold. First, by establishing hegemonic categories of identity and political position, the discourse sets limits on debate and marginalizes different ways of being Israeli and alternative possibilities for enacting the present or imagining a future. Second, the discourse conceals continuities and commonalities among Israelis who participate in the settler project in Palestine.

For example, preceding the disengagement, unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was most vocally opposed in Israel by the far right and religiously motivated settlers. But there was other opposition as well. A number of people took an anti-occupation/anti-disengagement position. This was an extremely difficult position to articulate within the space of Israel/Palestine because of the hegemonic categories of identity and politics established though the discourse of conflict. For those opposing Israeli expansion, opposition to the withdrawal could easily be read as supporting the ongoing military occupation of post-1967 territories. Opposition to withdrawal, then, would mean supporting those labeled as crazy, irrational, and violent settlers, which was not what members of this opposition intended. Instead, they saw carrying out the withdrawal in the absence of negotiations with a Palestinian partner to be a breach of moral responsibility. They argued that Israel's disengagement would not liberate Palestinians but create the conditions of a large prison.[25] Among the Israelis expressing this opinion were some who did not want to be the wardens of that prison, and thought such a situation would be detrimental to Israelis and Palestinians alike. In addition, some argued that leaving the Gaza Strip in the way it was being proposed would set up the conditions for another Israeli invasion. Some people who expressed both anti-occupation and anti-withdrawal positions also problematized the force of Israeli militarism that was being imposed upon the residents of the Gaza settlements. Some argued that forcibly removing people from their homes is wrong whether those people are Palestinians or Israeli settlers. For members of the predominately secular academy, this constellation of identity/politics, emerging primarily but not exclusively from the radical left of Israeli politics, is relatively easy to recognize. However, there were other marginalized positions that emerged from within the religiously motivated settler community.

The communities of Gush Katif included the majority of settlements in the Gaza Strip, and during the months preceding disengagement I found a great number of people there reflecting deeply on the impending crisis. Among the religiously motivated settlers[26] in Gush Katif were some who saw the impending

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[25] Some American scholars of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also expressed this perspective. See Beinin and Stein 2006: 13.

[26] The people living in the settlements in post-1967 Israeli-occupied territories include a variety of believers and non-believers, from different ethnic groups and places of origin with a range of political affiliations. This diversity tends to be lost in the hegemonic discourse of conflict.

disengagement as a very important sign, among the many signs from God that require interpretation. Among the interpretations offered was the idea that they—"we," in this case the settlers themselves, or sometimes the People of Israel (*Am Yisrael*)—should reflect upon their (our) lives and wonder why God would allow this to happen. Some settlers suggested reevaluating their own practices, and offered a range of possible interpretations. While some suggested that perhaps they had not been leading pious enough lives, others thought they had not reached out sufficiently to the secular community. Some questioned the motives for living in Gush Katif. Was it really a matter of devotion to serving the Lord, or had people come for the beautiful seaside landscape? Others were concerned that they had put too much emphasis on settling the Land of Israel and not enough on fulfilling other commandments. And still others thought the disengagement was a sign from God that called for humility and prayer rather than continued protest or political actions, because expressing certainty for human actions is tantamount to the sin of pride.[27] Perhaps most surprising were those who thought God was sending a message about how they and all of the People of Israel should be living together with Palestinians on this sacred land. This included some who considered the possibility of remaining on the coveted land by reaching an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, and those who sought commonality between their beliefs in the sovereignty of God and the beliefs of pious Muslim Palestinians. These are among the ways of being and believing that are pushed to the margins through a hegemonic discourse of conflict between left and right, secular and religious, and those opposed versus those in favor of Israeli settlement in post-1967 occupied territories.

The appearance of this conflict establishes and reinforces the categories of identity and political positions that sets the limits of debate and of ways of being in the present and imagining a future. Other ways of being and believing that do not fit easily into those hegemonic categories are often silenced through the vilification of religiously motivated settlers.

The appearance of incommensurable discourses in conflict conceals continuities and commonalities among Israelis who take part in the settler project in Palestine.[28] The discourse of conflict enables settler practices to continue throughout Israel and the occupied territories while maintaining a sense of moral legitimacy for the Zionist project as a whole through denouncing and de-legitimizing religious settlers. Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, the intense antagonism between these variously situated groups of Zionist Israelis

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[27] See the writings of the Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, whose thought has been adopted by religious settlers. On the problem of pride, see Ben Zion Bokser's English translation of Kook's writing (1978: 153–57).

[28] There are anti- or non-Zionist Israelis who oppose the settler project of Zionism. They include both political activists usually categorized at the extreme left, and Orthodox Jews who oppose the modern state of Israel because its establishment contradicts their beliefs. For more on Orthodox opposition to the state, see Rabkin 2006.

seems to be located less in their deep differences than in a *desire* to differen-
tiate, which is particularly pronounced among the secular and those of the
left (Dalsheim 2005). Settler practices include conflicts over territory, property
demolition by the state, and other conflicts over civil and human rights that are
not limited to the post-1967 occupied territories.[29] To paraphrase Mahmood,
the conflict between the secular left and religious right in Israel, and the vilifica-
tion of religiously motivated settlers, work to authorize certain kinds of subjec-
tivities (as good citizens, or true Zionists) by marking the exceptions (as radical,
irrational, extremists).

The appearance of conflict further conceals the historical relationship between
racism, anti-Semitism, and nationalism, re-inscribing the categories of Arab and
Jew as binary opposites. Numerous scholars and activists have engaged in decon-
structing such categories in order to undermine limitations on the possibility of
new coalitions and alliances against various forms of oppression. In Israel/Pales-
tine much of this work has taken aim at the Jewish/Arab divide, revealing it to be
a powerful and troubling fiction.[30] The existence of Jews of Middle Eastern
origin (*Mizrahim*, or Arab Jews) interferes with master narratives of nationalism
and Zionism, unsettling the conceptual border that marks the "Arab" as the con-
stitutive outside of and enemy to the "Jew."[31]

While I am suggesting that it is analytically productive to interrogate these
hegemonic categories of conflict to understand the work accomplished
through them, I must also maintain that it is crucial to *recognize* the beliefs,
practices, and ways of life through which people identify themselves. To
discard as meaningless that which gives meaning to so many lives seems
impractical if not impossible, but more importantly, it is a form of violence

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[29] Currently, conflicts over property and building rights, and the right to cultivate land, are
perhaps best known in the occupied territories in connection with the construction of a separation
barrier. However, such conflicts are also ongoing inside Israel, where Bedouin citizens of the state
continue to struggle for property rights in the Negev and the Galilee, and Palestinian citizens pursue
legal permits to build houses for their families. For an encompassing overview of these struggles,
see the work of geographer Oren Yiftachel (2006).

[30] Ella Shohat was perhaps the first to deconstruct this binary distinction and provide a sustained
analysis through her work on Jews from Arab countries, Mizrahim (1988; 2003). Ammiel Alcalay
later contributed to this effort through his work on literature and culture that describes a time pre-
ceding the dichotomous split between Jew and Arab in the Levant (1993). Smadar Lavie employed
her own positioning as a Mizrahi Jew in Israel and as an occupier opposed to occupation to further
undermine this distinction (1990; 1992). Yehouda Shenhav has been strategically employing the
term "Arab Jew," which undermines the distinction between Arab and Jew on which Jewish nation-
alism (modern political Zionism) depends (2003). Gil Anidjar has written a history of the relation-
ship of Arab and Jew as enemy to a Christian Europe (2003). Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin advocates
writing a Mizrahi history that challenges Zionism and offers the potential for a bi-national perspec-
tive combining Jew and Arab to redefine Palestine (2005).

[31] Critical and post-structural scholars of Israel have also challenged previous representations of
religious and secular clashes in Israel. Goodman and Yonah (2004) contend that the very centrality
of this conflict, the way in which it is represented as "the rift among the people," has the effect
of setting the parameters for both who can be included in "the people" and what can count as
"authentic" Judaism, which are so central to citizenship rights in the state of Israel.

that contradicts its very rationale. Maintaining this tension requires consideration of both the politics of powerful binary divisions and the political implications of undermining those divisions.[32] This means we must analyze the work of these powerful categories of difference but also respect the meanings they have in people's lives. It returns us to Arendt's refusal to reduce people to "human beings in general," and poses challenges to the prospects of living together with the experience of radical differences. In the case of vilified Jews, this means recognizing commonalities and continuities between "us" and "them," and the complexities that are concealed through the appearance of binary oppositions, which I have only touched upon in this article. But it also means recognizing the kinds of differences that are meaningful to the populations under consideration. One example of such a meaningful difference is the belief among religiously motivated settlers that the Jewish People have not only the right but the responsibility to live on the Land of Israel as promised and commanded by God, a belief that directly conflicts with secular and liberal understandings of Zionism that often coincide with Palestinian ideas about their rights to sovereignty. This approach entails recognizing those often considered morally repugnant, vilified Jews, and contemplating what it might mean to allow a place for their beliefs and practices in the contentious space of Israel/Palestine.[33]

Somehow, the imperative to recognize certain religious others in the fullest sense of the word—that is, to accept as different without interference, or to re-cognize, allowing the self to think again and be changed[34]—seems far more palatable when those others can be counted among the subaltern, those demonized others who are relatively lacking in the powers associated with the (secular) projects of contemporary liberalism.[35] This leads to a certain discomfort that seems to be located in politics but might not be altogether disconnected from a theoretical uneasiness. On the one hand, if it is a theoretical mistake to extend the analysis of the problematic relationship between liberalism and certain forms of religiosity—as in the cases cited above—to the division between religiously motivated Israeli settlers and their liberal opposition, then the reasoning behind the very analyses may come into

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[32] Asad asks, "What politics are promoted by the notion that the world is *not* divided into modern and nonmodern, into West and non-West? What practical options are opened up or closed by the notion that the world has *no* significant binary features, that it is, on the contrary, divided into overlapping, fragmented cultures, hybrid selves, continuously dissolving and emerging social states?" (2003: 15).

[33] The potential for a two-state solution that might have made the claims of religiously motivated settlers practically irrelevant seems to be fading from the horizon, and thus it is becoming increasingly urgent to think seriously about how to live together—to love thy neighbor/enemy as thyself.

[34] I borrow this sense of the term recognition as including re-cognition from Johannes Fabian (1999).

[35] Recall the concerns of Susan Harding about the problem of representing fundamentalist Christians in an academic atmosphere in which they were the "repugnant" cultural others (1991).

question. If, on the other, this theorizing can be applied, we are left to ponder the implications of a moral imperative to recognize not only currently demonized Muslims, but also the implications of recognizing the humanity of vilified Jewish settlers.

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